



A Daily Publication of:



Affirmation

United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns

General Conference 2008 Fort Worth, TX

May 2, 2008

Issue 10

RECEIVED
FEB 26 2024

Spiritual Violence Sparks Protests

by Gary Shephard
Newsletter Staff

Wednesday's vote to accept the minority report on Paragraph 161.G has sparked multiple protests. This was partly in response to the acceptance of the minority report. It was partly in response to the ugliness of the arguments against the majority report and for the minority report.

The first protest Wednesday evening consisted of the Common Witness people who were able to, to stand at the door so that delegates would have to walk past them on their way back from their dinner break. Anyone with too much strong emotion was requested to care for themselves rather than engage in the protest.

The second protest was before Thursday's session started. Body outlines were chalked in

various locations. Those who were able to continued to lie in their chalk outlines as delegates walked past into the convention center.

The third and by far largest protest happened during the morning plenary. Under rule 3.3 the presiding bishop recessed the session for 15 minutes so that protesters, many of them dressed in black with black scarves over their

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Those Patronizing Clichés

by Rev. Richard F. Burdon,
Retired, Oregon-Idaho
Annual Conference

Oh, those patronizing clichés: "Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin," "We are all sinners so all are in need of forgiveness." "God loves everybody so everybody is welcome here." "Don't Ask, Don't Tell." Yet for 36 years our church law proclaims: "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching."

They gloss over the harm done to those whom the church has denied full participation as members. Every time a person leaves the church in despair and hopelessness the church has failed to minister to those begging for a ministry of understanding and welcome.

A committee coined the phrase "the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching" but it is time to hit the delete key on that old line

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Pastoral Care Support
Line 612-353-7445 thru end of GC

Breakfast – Every day from 7:30 – 8:30 AM First Christian Church. Last breakfast tomorrow, Sat, 5/3.

Lunch – Every day from 12:00 – 2:30 PM First Christian Church. Last lunch today.

MFSA Speaker series
Every day from 1:15 – 2:00 PM, First Christian Church

Reconciling Closing Communion Tonight after GC ends. Late. General Worth Square.



OUT Is published daily during United Methodist General Conference 2008, Fort Worth, Texas by Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns; PO Box 1021, Evanston, IL 60204.

www.umaffirm.org, E-mail: umaffirmation@yahoo.com*

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Articles for the newsletter or comments may be sent to AffirmationNewsletter_at_yahoogroups.com*

Co-Editors:

Gary Shephard and Judy WestLee

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Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005

* **Note:** substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "_at_" in the email addresses.



Sexual Based Violence, Discrimination Condemned

by Victoria Rebeck, edited by Gary Shephard

Violence and discrimination against gay, lesbians, transgender, and bisexual people was firmly condemned Wednesday. The GC delegates passed a resolution saying that *"actions rooted in homophobia and heterosexism, including violence, threats, ridicule, humiliation, discrimination, isolations and rejection, is damaging to persons of all sexual orientations and identities."*

The resolution also calls the United Methodist Church to strengthen its advocacy of the eradication of sexism by opposing all forms of violence or discrimination based on gender, gender identity, sexual practice or sexual orientation. Further, it directs the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society, based in Washington, D.C., to provide resources and materials *"aimed at educating members of the local churches about the reality, issues, and effects of homophobia and heterosexism and the need for Christian witness against these facts of marginalization."*

The resolution did not make a statement about homosexuality. Its purpose was to condemn violence and discrimination against people who do not "appear to fit within the particular category defined as appropriate for their gender."

To read the complete text, visit <http://gc2008.umc.org> and under "Track legislation" enter petition 80845.

by Diane DeLap
Affirmation Spokesperson

By a vote of 501 to 417 the UMC General Conference voted to accept a new version of Paragraph 161.G. However, instead of accepting the majority report from the Church and Society 2 Legislative Committee that would have removed the "incompatibility" language, the minority report was accepted. The majority report stated in part that *"We know that all are God's children and of sacred worth; yet we have been, and remain, divided regarding homosexual expressions of human sexuality. Faithful, thoughtful people who have grappled with this issue deeply disagree with one another; yet all seek a faithful witness. We continue to reason and pray together with faith and hope that the Holy Spirit will soon bring reconciliation to our community of faith."* This version offered the hope of breaking the logjam of painful conflict that the UMC has endured for the past thirty years.

The new text of Paragraph 161.G can be found at <http://calms.umc.org/2008/Menu.aspx?type=Petition&mode=Single&Number=80449>

Legislative Miscellaneous

An attempt to change Paragraph 214 in Section V Church membership to prevent an elder from preventing someone the elder feels unworthy of church membership from joining failed to pass. This means that Judicial Council ruling 1032 is still in effect and anyone can be denied membership if the pastor determines the person is not ready for membership for any reason.

An irregularity in the voting on this measure has come to light, but it's unclear at this time whether the item will be voted on again.

Items barring transgender clergy were voted down.



(Spiritual Violence...Continued from page 1)

heads, filed in filling the area between the four sections of delegates on the floor. Additional protesters and supporters stood in the stands. As the protesters filed in and turned to face the delegates they sang *Were You There?* Then a proclamation was read.

(Clichés...Continued from page 1)

of defense. Scripture does not support such rhetoric, nor does tradition, nor experience, nor reason. The Church's exclusionary pronouncement betrays the reality that the church has failed to minister to a talented, loving minority. There are few places in the Church where the homosexual minority can find true welcome, comfort, understanding, council, and a place to be one's self. The secular world has moved farther and faster toward inclusiveness, thus leaving the church squabbling over a sin that does not exist.

After 25 years of struggling to be a clergyperson and outwardly a model family man, supposedly in love with a woman, and producing two lovely, intelligent children I arrived at an "outing" juncture which left me adrift without the ministry of the church. There was no alternative but to search outside my

You can find that on page 4 of this newsletter as *Proclamation – Witness – General Conference 2008*. People were then invited, both protesters and delegates alike, to lay black cloth on the communion table in the middle of the delegate area. At the end of the 15 minutes the protesters left the floor. At

denomination for council and for help to accept the truth about myself. I am a gay man.

I served the church as a missionary on two continents and as a parish pastor for 10 years, all the while living a dual life. It was a life of constant fear of discovery--always looking

"It was a life of constant fear of discovery--always looking over my shoulder afraid of potential attacks or revelations."

over my shoulder afraid of potential attacks or revelations. I had encountered physical brutality, verbal assaults, and heard demeaning categorizations. Religious bigotry battered my personhood. I paid a heavy price for pretending to be something other than what

that time 16 bishops and representatives from the Common Witness coalition started meeting in Holy Conferencing. As of Thursday afternoon we found out that the Holy Conferencing would continue after General Conference.

God intended for me. Those clichés developed by an uninformed church had for years blocked my route to self-discovery.

The movie *Brokeback Mountain* made it clear to me that my life had parallels to that story. I was confused about my search for identity, as they were. They tried to live an idealized life. They longed for love they hoped to find in marriage, romance, and a home life with children to raise. It is a sad story of a love and ideal that could never be realized because of their denial of being gay. They sought in vain to fulfill the marriage paradigm.

The lives of these two fictional characters are symbolic of millions of families facing the dilemma of trying to deny their true nature while living a lie.

The LGBTQ world is in desperate need of a compassionate church that understands its need for understanding, love, and acceptance.



Fort Worth Witness Proclamation

Drafted by the Witness Team of Reconciling Ministries Network

We have heard Jesus say – to all persons without exception – “follow me.”

We are part of God’s living body in today’s world, but our United Methodist Church refuses to accept what God has done, refuses to keep covenant with its own words in the baptismal promise, refuses to honor God’s call to professional ministry, refuses to do no harm, refuses to open its hearts, minds, and doors.

The unchurched notice. They notice the church cruelly scape goating lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people on the altar of so-called unity

The young notice. They notice the church denying, refusing, threatening, removing, closeting the LGBT people who faithfully serve the church.

The world notices.

We notice.

God notices.

The United Methodist baptismal liturgy calls all of us to accept the freedom and power God gives us to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in *whatever* forms they present themselves.

It is our *duty* – our baptismal *covenant* – to stand *against* the sin of the church, to stand *for* God’s freedom and power, to *affirm* God’s *entire* body of Christ that is the church.

We are God’s children, here ... now.

Today we boldly declare by standing here that our church’s doors and our ministries will radically obey the Gospel that we defy bigotry and ignorance, that the anti-gay policies and practices of The United Methodist Church are wrong.

By human means we cannot stand but by the grace of God we can.

By standing we reject the idea that homosexuality is a sin

By standing we affirm that sexuality *is* a good gift of God

By standing we affirm our intent to spread God’s love and grace

By standing we bless and celebrate families, all families.

We do not stand alone.

We stand in solidarity with all those who are *not* here, who are *not* in our congregations.

We stand with those who’ve been *forced* out and who’ve *never* come in, who *already* affirm one another as beloved children of God, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

We stand with holy boldness

to *welcome* LGBT laity and clergy into our churches and pulpits, NOW;

to *keep* baptismal promises for all, NOW; to affirm calls to ministries for *all* people,

NOW;

to bless covenant relationships *in* our churches *by* our clergy, NOW;

to assure *membership* for *all*, NOW; to provide *hospitality* for *all*, NOW.

Join us. Stand now. Build our future with hope and trust in God.